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ABSTRACT

Problems of the American economy can be eased by developing a national economic policy based upon human resource development and training. Ten observations on economics can be made as they relate to human resource development and the role of two-year institutions in that area. The poor national economic performance is connected to continued use of worn-out economic policies. People must be encouraged to be trained, not because they are poor, but because they are untapped human resources. More research is needed in the area of how to encourage greater investment in human resource development. Employment growth, currently concentrated in the service sector, must be shifted. Specific steps should be taken to alleviate the discrepancy between high unemployment and skilled worker shortages. The cycle must be completed from new technology to reduced prices to higher quality in order to regain a competitive edge in the world market. New thinking about vocational education and vocational needs is required. Postsecondary institutions need to prepare to serve new types of students--adults with prior life experiences and work history. Urban extension programs are needed to address unique city problems. Finally, a national human resource development policy needs to be implemented through community and technical colleges. (Questions and answers are appended.) (YLB)

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Occasional Paper No. 83

A NATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT POLICY: THE ROLE OF POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

By

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FOREWORD

As our nation begins to move toward economic recovery, one essential factor is the need to train skilled, productive workers. In order for economic recovery to occur, Dr. Dale Parnell, President of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, is calling for a national policy for human resource development.

Dr. Parnell is an educational leader who has served as a teacher, principal, and superintendent in secondary schools. He was the Superintendent of Public Schools and Community Colleges for the state of Oregon. He was the founding President of Lane Community College, Eugene, Oregon; Chancellor, San Diego Community College system, California; and President of the San Joaquin Delta College in California. He is an author and lecturer in areas that have enhanced vocational education in community and technical colleges, such as competency-based approaches to vocational programs. He has held membership with and provided service to many organizations including the Association of American Colleges, the American Vocational Association, Phi Delta Kappa, and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Currently, he is the chief spokesperson for community and technical colleges in the United States as President of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges.

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I present, on behalf of the National Center for Research in Vocational Education and The Ohio State University, this Occasional Paper that was developed from Dr. Parnell's presentation entitled "A National Human Resource Development Policy: The Role of Postsecondary Vocational Education."

Robert E. Taylor
Executive Director
The National Center for Research
in Vocational Education

A NATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT POLICY: THE ROLE OF POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

I am going to change the title of this paper a little. It really is about "New Wine in New Wineskins." I want to describe the work of community and technical colleges, and in the process, I will present a few statistics.

This fall over 10 million people were enrolled in one or more classes in American community and technical colleges. We will serve close to 13 million people in the 1981-82 college year. In 1960 the number of people served was about 650,000. This growth tells quite a story when one looks at these statistics alone. But, upon looking a little deeper into the lives of people, and upon hearing the testimonials of individuals who have been served by America's community and technical colleges, the story is even more impressive. I am encouraging social historians, who have largely ignored the community and technical college movement, to study this as a sociological phenomenon in America. It is an unrivaled and unprecedented event in our history.

There are three things that have happened in higher education in this country that are particularly significant to the area of employment development and training. "Human resource development" is what it is called today. The first one was the development of the land grant institution. That has done a tremendous amount of good for America. The contributions of the Cooperative Extension Service agents, the 4-H clubs, and the home economists connected with land grant institutions have increased the educational advantages of Americans. The second great development was the GI Bill following World War II that provided veterans with postsecondary schooling. The third great development was when the American two-year postsecondary institutions began to serve the average person. It is this great enterprise, the sociological phenomenon which grows each day, that this paper addresses.

It is important to point out to you that only about 15 percent of the American population holds a bachelor's degree or higher. The two-year institutions provide excellent service to those students who transfer to four-year institutions to pursue bachelor's or higher degrees. But they are also serving a great host of our citizens who have never before had opportunities in higher education. If there is one word to describe the American community college or technical institute, it would be the word "opportunity." We provide opportunity for people who have not had it before. I am proud of the fact that I represent "opportunity colleges" that provide essential educational possibilities for average people—the large group of people who keep this country together by working and paying their taxes. It is for this group that a national human resource development policy is absolutely necessary to preserve the American economy.

I am going to make ten general observations that relate to the subject of human resource development and the role of two-year institutions in that area. However, I am quick to admit that a total human resource development program is much larger than the American community and technical college. First, I will explain the context within which my observations were developed. We must promote human resource development. This policy should have the same importance and magnitude as our foreign policy. This society will be evaluated in the long run primarily on the basis of what we do with our human resources rather than our machine resources, such as cars, refrigerators, or computers. If we do not seek the best in our people and fully utilize their capabilities, we will become a wasteful society regardless of achievements in other areas.

This country can never be complacent about the waste of youthful energy, which we *are* currently wasting. How can we ever be complacent about the waste of mature experience and wisdom—but this too we are wasting. I believe it was Eric Hoffer who stated that we tell people not to waste their time, and then we allow them to waste their lives. American community and technical colleges say that this waste is wrong, and we intend to do something about it. We must begin to think deeply in a macrosense about these issues; in a macroeconomic sense and in a macro-human resource development sense.

I would also like to describe my experiences as the new representative of community and technical colleges in Washington, D.C., as background to my ten economic observations. Washington, D.C. is really an island of sixty-eight square miles sitting amidst a sea of reality. And that is probably not far from accurate, if you are there all the time. An editorial from the *Wall Street Journal* by Robert Merry gave some ideas about the Congress that just adjourned. "The Senate was clearly frustrated last week when members of the President's Council of Economic Advisors said that budgetary red ink isn't as damaging to the economy as many in Congress and the financial community think. The White House later backed off from that position but not before it touched off a fireworks display of senatorial debate over economic theory."

So the clash of economic doctrines has sprung up again, and it goes back many decades. Nothing is really new about it. One view is that if the government puts dollars into citizen's pockets through spending programs and tax cuts, then those people will spend more money, thus creating incentives for production. I think the most lucid and forceful proponent of that doctrine was the late Hubert Humphrey who, in times of recession, would cry out, "How can we have a balanced budget with so many people out of work?" For decades Republicans fought that politically popular theory by calling it fiscally irresponsible. They were crying for a balanced budget. And now, the Council of Economic Advisors from the White House says that it does not really make all that much difference.

There will be a great fight in the 1982 congressional session over tax cuts on the one hand and a balanced budget on the other. The best quote of the day is from Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina, who expressed his views on the tax cuts in his characteristically less than delicate way. "Your party," he told his Republican colleagues, "has sort of a kidney stone you are going to have to pass." That is a fair description of the dilemma facing the Republicans in the 1982 session of Congress. We are far from the end of the balanced budget debate, and we are going to see some powerful arguments about economic theory. In the process, we will all probably learn more about economics than we care to know. So, with the above descriptions of the current dilemma, I would like to discuss my ten observations on economics as they relate to human resource development.

The first observation is regarding something you may have heard President Reagan say. "Do you feel better off today than you did one year ago?" In other words, what is the misery index today as opposed to a year ago? Many statements like that will be made in the upcoming economic debates. I contend that our national economic performance is connected to our continued use of worn-out economic policies. I think conservative economists, liberal economists, and people from all walks of life, must challenge current economic policy. It is not a Republican problem, it is not a Democratic problem. It is a major American economic problem. Neither persistent economic restraint and tight money at high interest rates, nor persistent economic stimulus, increased spending, and easy borrowing, seem to sustain our kind of economy. It does not sustain economic stability and moderate economic growth. We simply must move to something else. Our country's economic health cannot last much longer if it continues to move wildly from stagflation to inflation to stagflation.

We must try something different. I am pushing for a national economic policy based upon human resource development and training. Perhaps a solid standing, four-legged stool would symbolize the new policy. Such a policy requires a research and development leg, a productivity leg, a monetary leg, and a human resource development leg. I am appreciative of the fact that this National Center is beginning to take a macrolook at the idea of human resource development, rather than a microlook that only includes vocational education. Previously, those of us interested in vocational education studied this entire issue too narrowly. We are simply tyrannized by little decisions in this country. Little decisions in vocational education are made, little decisions in CETA are made, and little decisions are made in agriculture, most of which never connect to or address the macro-human resource development problem. That leads me to my second observation. Past and present federal governmental policies and programs seem to have been instruments to achieve social equity rather than to encourage long-range development of people and their economic self-sufficiency. At San Joaquin Delta College in California where I was employed prior to working for the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, I observed that federal regulation earmarked half the vocational education money for programs that tried to achieve some sort of social equity. I am not opposed to achieving social equity, but I do not think it can be accomplished with the small amount of money community and technical colleges receive for vocational education. Last year approximately 700 million federal dollars were budgeted for vocational education in the United States. Only half that amount got to the institutions delivering vocational programs. Additionally, postsecondary educational institutions educated about 40 percent of the vocational education students and received only 12 percent of the federal vocational money. I think we must do something about that situation. But more importantly, we also must take a macrolook at where vocational education fits into the human resource development policy of this country. We must separate the welfare issues, which have been the downfall of CETA, from the training issues.

We must encourage people to be trained, not because they are poor, but because they are untapped human resources. It does make a difference how we view the question of training. If we only view people as needing training because they are poor, because they are women, or because they are minorities, then programs are going to be designed in one way. I contend that we must better utilize the energies of women, minorities, and handicapped people in our society. But, when we try to wrap that all up in one piece of legislation and endeavor to achieve social equity without connecting the effort to other things in the society, it never really works. Much more research is required on this subject.

A third observation deals with this question: What is the economic logic in encouraging investments, via public tax incentives, in machines and equipment over investment in people? We, through current federal monetary policy, are doing just that. I believe that human resource development capital has accounted for a larger share of our economic growth in this country than machine capital investment. Much of our nation's well-being is tied to our human resources. That is the reason why I mentioned the historical development of the land grant institutions and the investment made there. This investment paid off, by figuratively making two blades of grass grow where one grew before. The GI Bill was another tremendous investment in this country's human resources. It had a fantastic payoff. The community and technical colleges are another investment in our people, our human resources. I am challenging us in the 1980s to develop a national policy of investing in human capital as well as in machine capital. Much of our nation's well-being is directly related to it. When unemployment goes up, welfare costs go up and tax receipts go down. We need more research in the area of how to encourage greater investment in human resource development in a credible way.

The fourth observation is that current growth in employment is concentrated in low wage, low productivity, dead-end jobs that primarily use the service of women and new entrants to the labor market. We have heard people praising the growth of jobs in this country. In 1948 there were an estimated 21 million people in goods production occupations and some 27 million people in service occupations: nearly a 1:1 ratio. In 1977, there were 25 million people in goods production occupations, an increase of about 4 million, and 54 million people in service occupations, an increase of some 27 million. The ratio was then 1:2, or double the number of service jobs. The Bureau of International Labor Affairs reports that the decline in United States international trade performance is due in part to a declining U.S. investment in the development of a skilled labor force between 1963 and 1976. The U.S. share of the world's skilled workers fell from 29 percent to 26 percent during that period, and assuming we make no additional efforts to develop skilled workers, in the future two out of three workers in this country will be employed in the service sector. They will fill largely low paying and dead-end positions. I heard a proud politician say we have added 13 million jobs over the last six years to this economy. I would ask what kind of jobs we have added. If they are low paying, low productivity, dead-end jobs, then I wonder if that statement should be made with pride. A certain number of those types of jobs are necessary, but I contend that if we continue to concentrate on the development of jobs in the service sector, we will have problems in the future.

Observation number five is that the discrepancy between high unemployment and skilled worker shortages will become greater unless some very specific steps are taken. The Index of Help Wanted Advertising offers evidence of the mismatch between the needs of the workplace and the skills of United States workers. This index is a seasonally adjusted measure based on the number of help wanted advertisements printed in the classified advertising section of leading newspapers. While unemployment remained at 7.6 percent during May of both 1980 and 1981, the help wanted index increased from 112 to 118. Simply put, more job openings were reported, but unemployment did not go down. Since then, unemployment has grown much higher today, reaching approximately 9 percent. It is a tragedy that a tremendous volume of opportunities for people exist on the one hand yet those people are faced by unemployment on the other.

The shortage of skilled workers is documented by the U.S. Department of Labor in a publication entitled, *The Forecasting of Manpower Requirements*. This publication projects a shortage of persons adequately trained in certain professional and technical occupations, including a shortage of skilled workers such as machinists, mechanics, machine repair persons, electricians, stenographers, bookkeepers, skilled office machine operators, accountants, and computer programmers.

There are a number of factors that make it evident that the shortage of skilled workers will only grow worse in the years to come. The work force in this country is aging—meaning the proportion of older to younger workers is increasing. The average age of tool and die makers is about fifty years. Forty percent of the nation's engineers are forty or over. The number of people aged sixty-five and over is growing about twice as fast as the population of the nation as a whole. The massive buildup of the nation's defense establishment proposed by the Reagan administration will only intensify competition for the skilled worker. The House Committee on Armed Services asserts that labor shortages penetrate deeply into the lower tiers of the industrial base. There are currently shortages in the number of skilled production workers, machinists, electronic technicians, tool and die makers, test technicians, optical personnel, and skilled assemblers.

I am advocating an upward mobility program to identify people who are now working in dead-end jobs and to train them for occupational areas that have shortages of skilled workers. It would be good for everyone if that were a national policy—good for the individual and good for the skilled worker shortage problem. This would open up a whole host of entry-level jobs that are now desperately required. We can't put new wine in the same old wineskins. And it is this new kind of thinking that I am urging the National Center to employ in undertaking research on vocational education programs. Some new approaches are required.

My sixth observation is this: we must complete the cycle from new technology, to reduced prices, to higher quality if we are to regain our competitive edge in the world market. That simply will not be accomplished in an inflation-producing, skilled worker shortage economy. When skilled workers are not in sufficient supply, inflation increases. International competition, a highly mobile population, an increasingly mobile employer base, and a national defense establishment all needing skilled workers scream out for a national human resource development policy. This is more, much more, than a state and local matter. The current administration may say, "Well, this is only a state rights issue," or, "This is only a local matter, let them handle it." What we are really talking about is the very survival of our country, and we must view that as a national problem. There is a compelling reason to address the whole issue of national human resource development, if for no other reason than for national defense.

Observation number seven involves new thinking about vocational education. Perhaps we ought to view vocational education courses differently than we have in the past. Studying a foreign language may be a vocational need today. There is a tremendous need for people who can speak other languages, who can communicate effectively. You may *buy* goods using any language, but you *sell* in the language of the country. Certainly, the Japanese do not send many people over here who do not speak English. How many do we send to Japan who can speak Japanese? How many people who can speak the native language do we send to third world countries? Indeed, studying a foreign language ought to be considered an important element of vocational programs, in light of what is required to participate in the international market today. If we are really going to solve the economic problems facing us, we must do more research in devising methods to complete the cycle from new technology to reduced prices to higher quality. This will require new thinking about what is included in the development of our human resources.

My eighth observation is that we have gone from a baby boom to a baby bust. During the 1980s we will see a sharp drop in the growth of our labor force. It will drop from a 2.3 percent growth rate to something under 1 percent during this decade. According to U.S. Department of Labor statistics, during the 1980s, the number of people in the labor force age sixteen to twenty-four will have decreased by about 16 percent, and the number of the total labor force comprised by this sixteen- to twenty-four-year-old age group will have fallen from 24 percent to 18 percent. Students in postsecondary education will be adults with prior work histories and prior life experiences. Many colleges and universities are not really thinking this implication all the way through. A person who comes to a postsecondary institution with prior life experiences and prior work history may not need to fulfill all the general education requirements that we insist upon for the eighteen- or nineteen-year-old student. It requires some new thinking to serve new types students. What do they bring to us? We cannot treat older students as if they bring nothing to us as an educational institution.

This shift in the number of people aged sixteen- to twenty-four may make it necessary for secondary schools to become less involved in specific job training. We should not narrow the perspective of a seventeen-year-old student. Rather, the secondary school should open up more opportunities in life rather than fewer. High school students certainly should concentrate on career cluster kinds of training. Let me give you an example of the cluster approach applied to the area of mechanics. High school students ought to work in the area of systems, i.e., electrical systems, internal combustion systems, hydraulic systems, as opposed to specific job training. Leave the specific job training to the postsecondary institution. I am not sure this message is getting across to the high schools. The community and technical colleges must help them move in that direction, not because postsecondary institutions know best, but because it would help create a comprehensive and sequential human resource development program. Actual unemployment could It will exacerbate the skilled worker shortage unless we design a system to solve the problem.

Now, my ninth observation is that during the last fifty years over 50 million people left the farm and moved to the cities or the suburbs. The Extension Act, the 4-H clubs, and many of the activities of land grant institutions have been primarily aimed at a rural population. We need programs that are aimed in a similar fashion at an urban and suburban population. I am calling for an urban extension program, particularly involving city government and community and technical colleges, that will address the unique problems of the cities. It seems that when people live close together, there is more alienation, more crime, and generally more problems. This is not being addressed in any systematic way. We have community and technical colleges and city governments working every day on these problems. Maybe we need to take a new look at how the Cooperative Extension Service operates and apply its strategies to the problems of the cities. I don't mean that we should short change the rural areas of our country, but we must face the demographic shifts in our society.

My tenth observation is that federal and state vocational education and employment development efforts are extremely fragmented. We have an employment service that operates makers, particularly those in Washington, D.C., seem to feel compelled to invent new strategies that are, to repeat Toynbee's definition of history, "just one damned thing after another." A number of the strategies we have had, including CETA, tend to fall in that category. I contend that we already have the means to implement a national human resource development policy through the community and technical colleges. If we need to use community and technical college equipment and facilities twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, as in World War II, then we should do it. In some skilled worker shortage areas this must be done because the situation is approaching emergency status.

The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges will be proposing a macroapproach to adult training and employment development. We should treat the high school vocational education program separately because it deserves to stand alone from the adult program. I believe that high school and adult programs have separate and different problems that require different answers. However, our current vocational education effort continues to put them all in the same bag. A separate approach to adult training and employment development would combine some current vocational education resources and CETA resources with new macroapproaches. Some elements will include an upward mobility aspect, a skilled worker shortage aspect particularly aimed at the high-technology occupations and defense needs. We

now have a bill being introduced in Congress for a noncommissioned officer program in community and technical colleges. The program would provide technicians for the military, much like the Reserve Officers Training Corps program. Meanwhile on weekends and during the summer, trainees work with the military and enter the service in a technician category. This may create a new rank of warrant officers or something of that nature. The military is the largest single employer in the country, and it has some tremendous needs. We should definitely view it as an employer.

Urban enterprise zones is another aspect of our approach to human resource development. The Private Industry Councils in cities have had enough experience that they now can deal more effectively with the hard-core unemployed. The employers must deal with the hard-core unemployment problem in a sincere way, or it is never going to be solved. That is a tough social issue. The Private Industry Councils must devote priority energy to solving the problem of the hard-core unemployed with on-the-job training.

Collegiate youth organizations, modeled after high school vocational youth organizations, must be established in community colleges as counterparts to the DECA, FFA, VICA, and the others. College students can do far more by acting as liaisons with high school students than we can. It would be an interesting and effective approach for community colleges to have vibrant collegiate organizations connected to occupational pursuits just as we have in high schools. The national, state, and local secondary school vocational youth groups are effective methods of dealing with motivations and attitudes.

We must also look at rewards and incentives to encourage business and industry's investment in human resources. For some reason the targeted tax credit program as an incentive to business and industry really has not worked very well. We need to examine it from a research standpoint to determine why.

Finally, major emphasis must be given to entrepreneurial training to initiate and support small businesses. For one reason, most of the new jobs in this country are going to come from small business. Because of this, tremendous opportunities exist in the small business arena. As just one of many examples, senior citizens can use their talents and energy as advisors to small business owners.

I have attempted to outline ten observations about the American economy and explain that we need new wine and new wineskins to address the related problems. The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges will be moving toward solutions to these problems. We do not have all the answers. We need research help to undergird much of what we are doing. It is a matter of combining our best thinking solve problems affecting the stability and future of our nation.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Will the new tax laws help businesses make human resource development commitments and link their training efforts with community and technical colleges?

I'm really not convinced that the new tax laws will do much to encourage investment in human resource development. I recently attended a conference sponsored by the American Society for Training and Development at the Xerox Corporation headquarters in Virginia. There was a lot of discussion about human resource development, but there was not much discussion about cooperation with postsecondary institutions. The discussion was centered on how companies can provide training for themselves. They spoke in terms of setting up a national effort for business and industry to do most of the training. They only spoke of tax incentives as they relate to businesses and industries that provide their own training. They must do some of it themselves, which is part of their responsibility, but there is a great deal of training that community and technical colleges can provide. Where would the American hospital industry be without associate degree nurses, for example? Business must look further into the macro-employment possibilities. Community and technical colleges have a role to play in implementing a macro-human resources system, and we must point that out forcefully to business and industry. It really should be a partnership.

Question: You made an observation that you feel the employment services staff should help in placement for community college students. Is there any development of that idea as far as you are aware?

Several community colleges across the country have developed a cooperative effort. In San Joaquin Delta College, the employment service did do the placement for our institution. So, I know it works. In other instances it has not worked very well, and we need further dialogue. But I was not suggesting that this cooperation take place as an isolated case here and there. I am really talking about including the employment service as part of the national employment development and training proposal. There is no national push for this concept yet, it would address part of the fragmentation problem we must overcome in creating a total human resource development policy.

Question: Has there been any move on the part of business and industry to include community and technical colleges in their expansion of training?

Yes, there is a tremendous move in that direction, and we're going to try to encourage, help, and nurture it. General Motors has just announced that it is going to do most of their training via the community colleges of the country. They will be extending that effort to as many as sixty or sixty-five community colleges across the nation. These programs will include training for service technicians and service managers. GM will be putting up a great deal of the money. I think you will see an increase in development in that area.

Question: Would you elaborate your point about the need for more investment in human resources as well as in machine resources.

In some of our old tax laws and even in new ones, we have used tax deductions to encourage heavy investment in machine resources. Incentives such as tax deductions and depreciation allowances could also be used to encourage investment in human resources. On the other hand, greater investments in capital improvements and machinery often increase the demand for training and retraining because of increased use of high technology.

We have not adequately planned for the rapidly developing nature of our economy. An example of this is the advent of the robotics industry. Robotics will have as much impact on industry as the computer and the microchip have. It will create many different kinds of jobs. The development of the computer did away with some low skilled jobs, but it created a whole new set of technical jobs. Just check the newspaper today and see the needs for computer programmers, computer analysts, machine technicians, and machine operators. Other technological developments are going to create jobs in even greater numbers. All of that scares me because it will widen the gap between unemployed workers and skilled jobs available rather than narrow it. Widening this gap creates another inflationary cycle. Remember that inflation is built on shortages. To meet these demands, it is absolutely essential that we develop a national human resource development policy.

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